



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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State Health Department Epidemiologists Coauthor Article Published in the New England Journal of Medicine

BISMARCK, N.D. – Three North Dakota Department of Health epidemiologists are coauthors of an article published in the most recent edition of *The New England Journal of Medicine* regarding the emergence of an antibiotic-resistant strain of a bacterium that causes meningitis.

Published by the Massachusetts Medical Society, *The New England Journal of Medicine* is one of the most widely read peer-reviewed medical journals in the world.

Along with investigators from Minnesota and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Kirby Kruger, state epidemiologist; Tracy Miller, senior epidemiologist; and Molly Sander, Immunization Program manager, contributed to the article detailing the discovery and subsequent investigation of a strain of meningococcal bacteria resistant to the antibiotic ciprofloxacin (cipro), which is commonly used to prevent the spread of the disease.

The resistant strain of the bacteria was first discovered in January 2007 in a resident of eastern North Dakota. Three other people subsequently tested positive for the resistant strain in western Minnesota. Although cipro-resistant meningococcal has been found in other countries, these are the first reported cases in the United States.

The discovery of the cipro-resistant meningococcal is significant because cipro is one of the main drugs used in prevention of the disease. After discovery of the resistant strain, the state health departments in North Dakota and Minnesota advised health-care providers in eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota to use alternative antibiotics as preventive treatment for people who had close contact with someone diagnosed with meningococcal disease. In addition, the CDC recommended increased nationwide surveillance for antibiotic-resistant meningococcal bacteria.

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Although most people exposed to the meningococcal bacteria do not become seriously ill, some may develop meningitis, bloodstream infections and other serious infections. Symptoms include fever, headache, vomiting, stiff neck and a rash. Meningitis can cause sensitivity to light, confusion, drowsiness, seizures and sometimes coma. Occasionally, the disease can be fatal.

For more information, contact Kirby Kruger, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378.

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